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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FOR THORTON

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TAGS: [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [KSTC](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: ROP STAFFING CONSTRAINTS PRESENT CHALLENGE FOR
MEGAPORTS, CSI

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: Oman currently participates in two USG security programs designed to scan containerized cargo in overseas ports. The Department of Energy's (DOE) Megaports initiative and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Container Security Initiative are scheduled to begin linked operations in Oman as early as June 2007. ROP contacts are concerned, however, that the programs will place additional burdens on already stretched and limited Omani human resources. End summary.

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Megaports - Imminent Deployment
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12. (SBU) The DOE's Megaports initiative is scheduled to begin phase I of operations at Port of Salalah by the end of June 2007. Megaports will run in conjunction with DHS's Container Security Initiative (CSI), which has been in operation at the port since mid-2005. Once Megaports installation is complete, Oman will have the ability to inspect containerized cargo through an Integrated Container Inspection System (ICIS) including both non-intrusive imaging (NII) equipment and radiation portal monitors (RPM). ROP Customs will have primary, front-line responsibility under both programs for scanning U.S.-bound and other cargo for weapons, contraband, and nuclear and other radioactive material of proliferation concern.

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ROP Human Resource Constraints
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13. (C) Mid-ranking officers in ROP Customs working directly with both programs tell poloff that Customs' human resource constraints may significantly limit the ROP's ability to adequately staff the Megaports and CSI initiatives, and that the programs may end up straining existing capacity. Noting that the success of both programs depends in large part on the ability of front-line inspectors to conduct the requisite scanning, these contacts claim that staffing levels in ROP Customs have not risen to meet the demands of these new security commitments or the brisk growth of Oman's ports. Further, they report that they are unaware of any plans to systematically increase the number of ROP Customs inspectors, or to accelerate the pace of staff recruitment, in the near future.

14. (C) According to these officials, the number of Customs personnel assigned to Port of Salalah is barely sufficient to handle the current workload. Currently, there are 25 Customs officials at the Port, including three officers, split among four shifts. Each shift of at most twelve individuals is responsible for a wide range of responsibilities, including: collecting tariffs; completing clerical and administrative work; checking containers entering the port by truck; and inspecting general, non-containerized cargo brought by dhow from East Africa. (Note: Contacts at the Port suspect that the dhows may be involved in smuggling illicit cargo, including drugs, and deserve more scrutiny than they currently receive. End note.) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel assigned to Port of Salalah with the CSI program tell poloff that while Omani customs personnel are cooperative, they generally view requests to scan U.S.-bound cargo at the present rate of 20-30 containers per week as an additional and unwanted responsibility -- one that likely will increase once Megaports comes on line.

15. (C) The additional strain that the fully operational Megaports initiative may place on a staff already stretched thin, ROP contacts opine, is particularly challenging in the context of Port of Salalah's rapid growth. Port of Salalah presently handles a volume of 2.8 million containers per year through four berths, making it one of the top transshipment ports in the world. Gary Lemke (protect), the Chief Operating Officer of Salalah Port Services, the private company managing the port, told poloff that two additional berths should be operational by the first quarter of 2008, and that he expects a total of nine berths in operation by 2011. Officials in the office of the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Transportation and Communication, the Ministry responsible for the operation and development of Oman's ports, anticipate that Salalah's initial two berth expansion

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should increase volume by more than 50% to 4.5 million containers per year in 2008. Further, they expect the port regularly will handle eight million containers a year within the next decade. Given the rate of the port's expansion, according to our contacts, a concomitant increase in trained customs personnel is necessary.

16. (C) The ROP's rotational schedule, however, which shifts personnel among four different posts in Oman's Dhofar governorate for an average tour of one year, may make it difficult to keep personnel trained on the Megaports and CSI equipment in Salalah. One inspector with NII training recently was shifted from the port to a border post that does not have the same equipment. Contacts also report that currently only three of Port of Salalah's 25 customs officials have been trained in how to operate the NII equipment, and only one is on duty on any given shift. (Note: A program manager for W.J. Towell, the locally-based company with which the government of Oman has contracted for continuing maintenance of the equipment and training, told poloff that a minimum of two trained personnel is recommended to run and operate the type of equipment installed in Salalah. He added that while Towell has trained a total of 65 customs officials since 2005, most of them have been assigned to posts without NII equipment. End note.)

17. (C) Comment: Oman has displayed the political will at senior levels to partner with the USG on port security initiatives. In December 2006, the Omani government agreed to deepen its cooperation on transportation security by participating in the DOE and DHS's Secure Freight Initiative (SFI). Despite this commitment, human resource constraints in ROP Customs may effectively cap the number of containers that can be inspected, and thus frustrate USG goals to scan an increasing amount of U.S.-bound containerized cargo through Megaports and CSI. Sustained and coordinated assistance to ROP Customs from DOE, DHS and the Department of State's EXBS program for staff training and professional development, as well as organizational capacity building, may

be required in order to meet future program objectives. In the short term, Post will make some informal approaches to Omani Customs and other organizations to determine how they plan to address the problem. End comment.

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